

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-15, amend claim 16 and add claims 23-36 as set forth below.

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently amended) A system for providing value-added services relating to the distribution of a mailpiece within an international mailing system comprising:

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- a) a first database of mailer electronic addresses indexed by a mailer identification codes;
- b) a second database of postal authority addresses indexed by a postal authority identification codes;
- c) a means for incorporating a request for a value-added service and a mailer identification code on a mailpiece;
- d) means for creating at a first postal authority a mail item file corresponding to the mailpiece at said second postal authority; said mail item file including said mailer identification code and said value-added service request;
- e) means for determining, at said a second postal authority, said first postal authority address; and
- f) means for performing by said second postal authority said value-added service;
- g) means for communicating said performance of said value-added service to said first postal authority using said first postal authority address, wherein said first postal authority determines a mailer electronic address using a mailer identification code associated with the mailpiece and communicates performance of said value-added service to the mailer using the mailer electronic address said original mailer, said mailer address obtained using said first database.

17. The system as claimed in claim 16 wherein said mailer identification code is encrypted.

18. The system as claimed in claim 16 wherein said first database includes said mailer e-mail address.

19. The system as claimed in claim 16 wherein said second database includes said postal authority e-mail address.

20. The system as claimed in claim 16 wherein said value-added service request is a confirming electronic message.

21. The system as claimed in claim 17 wherein said set of data relating to value-added service request includes a facsimile number.

22. The system as claimed in claim 17 wherein said value-added service request is an electronic confirmation of receipt.

Add the following claims.

23. A method for providing value-added services requested by a mailer and relating to the handling of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities, the method comprising:

receiving a mail item at a final handling post;

scanning the mail item to obtain a digital image of the mail item and an identifier for an initial handling post;

obtaining a digital image of a signature of a recipient of the mail item as confirmation of delivery of the mail item;

merging the digital images of the signature and the mail item; and transmitting the merged digital images to the initial handling post.

24. The method of claim 23 comprising the further step of:
transmitting delivery confirmation from the initial handling post to a mailer of the mail item.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein the step of obtaining the digital image of the signature of the recipient includes the steps of:

obtaining a physical signature on a form; and
scanning the physical signature to obtain the digital image of the
signature.

26. The method of claim 23 wherein the step of transmitting the merged digital images to the initial handling post includes the steps of:

retrieving an electronic address corresponding to the initial handling post;
compressing the merged digital images to form a transfer file;
digitally signing the transfer file; and
transmitting the digitally signed transfer file to the initial handling post
using the electronic address.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the electronic address is one of an e-mail address, a facsimile number and a telephone number.

28. The method of claim 24 wherein the step of transmitting delivery confirmation from the initial handling post to the mailer of the mail item includes the steps of:

retrieving an electronic address of the mailer; and
sending an electronic message to the mailer confirming delivery of the
mail item.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein the electronic address is one of an e-mail address, a facsimile number, a pager number and a telephone number.

30. A method for providing value-added services requested by a mailer and relating to the handling of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities, the method comprising:

receiving electronically at an initial handling post a transfer file representing confirmation of delivery of a mail item by a final handling post;

parsing the transfer file to retrieve digital images of the mail item and a signature of a recipient confirming delivery of the mail item; and sending to the mailer confirmation of delivery of the mail item.

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31. The method of claim 30 wherein the transfer file is digitally signed by the final handling post, the method comprising the further steps of:

verifying the digital signature of the transfer file; and rejecting the transfer file if the digital signature is not correct.

32. The method of claim 30 wherein the confirmation of delivery is sent to a mailer electronic address, the mailer electronic address being one of an e-mail address, a facsimile number, a pager number and a telephone number.

33. The method of claim 30 wherein the step of parsing the transfer file includes parsing from the transfer file a mailer electronic address, a unique identity of the mail item and a unique identity of the mailer.

34. The method of claim 30 wherein the step of parsing the transfer file includes parsing from the transfer file a unique identity of the mail item and a unique identity of the mailer; and the step of sending to the mailer confirmation of delivery of the mail item includes determining a mailer electronic address from a look up table.

35. The method of claim 30 wherein the step of sending to the mailer confirmation of delivery of the mail item includes the step of:

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sending electronically digital images of the mail item and signature of the recipient.

36. The method of claim 32 wherein digital images of the mail item and the signature of the recipient are digitally signed before being sent.
